



Tapuitema

...ina ia manino le folauā.

Official American Samoa Government Weekly Newsletter



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Friday, February 29, 2008

Vol. III, No. 9

Lt. Gov. Ipulasi presents official ASG statement during Minimum Wage Field Hearing

The official statement of the American Samoa Government was made known by Lt. Governor Ipulasi Aitofele Sunia when he appeared at the minimum wage field hearing of the U.S. House Subcommittee on Insular Affairs held at the Governor H. Rex Lee Auditorium today.

The hearing drew the presence of local lawmakers, representatives of the two local canneries, the Chamber of Commerce, members of the general public, and Congressman Faleomavaega Eni Hunkin who traveled to the territory with subcommittee chairperson, U.S. Virgin Islands Congresswoman Donna Christensen.

Ipulasi's testimony centered in on the urgent need for remedial legislation addressing the minimum wage increases that Congress has mandated for American Samoa.

Ipulasi referred to a January 25 report to Congress where the Department of Labor described the economy of American Samoa as small and developing.

Ipulasi also made reference to hearings before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on March 1, 2006 where DOI's Deputy Assistant Secretary David Cohen stated that 'American Samoa has the narrowest economic base' of the four territories.

To document the point, Secretary Cohen noted that the per capita domestic product (GDP) in American Samoa ranks far below the other territories.

Further evidencing the urgent need for economic development:

1. American Samoa has a per capita income that is only one-fifth that of the rest of the United States.
2. The Territory has a large number of subsistence workers who cannot find paid employment.
3. 88 percent of all farms in the territory operate on a subsistence basis.
4. Despite a large out-migration of American Samoans to the United States, the territory still has a young, rapidly growing population.
5. The Territory's income primarily comes from two fish canning operations and from the Federal Government's operational and capital grants.
6. Recent employment gains in the territory have occurred mainly in low wage sectors. Even in the low-wage sectors, however, the Territory is at a competitive disadvantage to the Philippines and Thailand where wages are a fraction of the mandated federal minimum wage in American Samoa.

Ipulasi said, "To compensate for the Territory's wage disadvantage, its remote location, limited resources, and small internal market, the federal government previously had provided trade and tax incentives for economic development in American Samoa. Specifically, preferential quota allocations, particularly for canned fish, as well as favorable tariff treatment and federal tax credits had allowed American Samoa to develop a seafood canning industry."

A recent study funded by DOI reported that the fish canning industry is the mainstay of the Territory's economy, and the two canneries are responsible for the employment of well over half of American Samoa's entire workforce directly and indirectly. *(Continued on page 8)*

SHARE IMPORTANT INFORMATION & ACTIVITIES

with your ASG workforce as well as the citizens of American Samoa. Email your articles, announcements, pictures or other information to: Harry Stevens (harry.stevens@americansamoa.gov) or Tialuga Vince Iuli (vince.iuli@americansamoa.gov)

Local impact of minimum wage hike to be discussed in Washington DC

The local impact of the federal minimum wage law has made its way to Washington DC and the issue is set to be discussed before the US Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Governor Togiola Tulafono and Congressman Faleomavaega Eni Hunkin are among the witnesses scheduled to offer testimony during the hearing.

The purpose of the hearing is to hear testimony about the impact of increasing the minimum wages on the economy of American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI).

(The Governor's Minimum Wage Task Force has already submitted a report that recommends an end to the escalating clause, and the recommendation is echoed by members of the local Legislature, business owners, the canneries, and the Chamber of Commerce).

Togiola and Faleomavaega will be joined as witnesses by CNMI Governor Benigno Fital, a CNMI resident representative in Washington, and an economist from the US Department of Labor.

The first 50-cent hike went into effect last July. The next hike is scheduled to occur on May 25, 2008 and a raise will be implemented every year thereafter until the current minimum wage reaches the federal level of \$7.25 an hour.

Department of Commerce deputy director Lelei Peau testified in the Fono's lower chamber several weeks ago that the American Samoa Government was not affected during the first minimum wage hike increase. However, during the second hike (set for May), twelve career service employees will be affected, meaning that ASG will have to dish out an additional \$186,000 to pay them.

The first 50-cent minimum wage hike that went into effect last July cost \$4.5 million (for all industries) to implement. The second hike will cost the private sector an increase of \$5.4 million for 622 employees.

The first two minimum wage hikes for the private sector, not ASG, will require nearly \$10 million to implement and an additional \$6 million for the third year. And if the escalating clause is permitted to continue, by the 9th year (2015), the total wage hike bill will have reached \$55.6 million.

Looking at the figures, it is the general consensus that simply put – American Samoa just cannot afford the increase and its continuance will cause serious damage.

HISTORICAL NOTES

By: Stan Sorensen, Historian, Office of the Governor

On February 23, 1900, Commander Benjamin Franklin Tilley wrote to the Navy Department regarding his position as Commandant of the U.S. Naval Station Tutuila, saying that it would be better "if the officer charged with this responsibility has the explicit authority of this Government and knows its wishes." Unbeknownst to Tilley, President William McKinley had already signed the executive order giving him the authority that he wanted. Tilley did not receive his orders, and a copy of the executive order, until April 4, 1900, in Apia.

On February 23, 1901, "the Secretary of the Navy [John D. Long], with the approval of the President of the United States [William McKinley], ordered that no license be granted for the sale of wines and liquors" at the U.S. Naval Station Tutuila.

On February 23, 1912, American Samoa's Governor, Commander William Michael Crose, issued his "Regulation to Enforce the Educational Rights of Children" and his "Compulsory Education Regulation of 1912." These regulations required all children between the ages of 6 and 13 to attend school at least four days a week during the school year.

On February 24, 1840, Lieutenant William L. Hudson, USN, commanding USS *Peacock*, a sloop of war, was ordered to proceed to Saluafata, Upolu, and "obtain redress" for the murder of an American seaman there a year earlier. The schooner USS *Flying Fish* joined *Peacock*, and when they reached Saluafata, Hudson "made a peremptory demand for the murderer, which was answered by a positive refusal from the principal chief." This prompted Hudson to organize a landing party of "70 odd men," who were organized into three divisions. The *Peacock* was then "kedged to bring her broadside to bear on the town, and the 'long guns' made ready to fire," while the landing force waited in their longboats on the starboard quarter. *Peacock* then proceeded to "open fire on the village with round shot and grape." After 18 volleys had been fired, two of the divisions landed, and began "the destruction of the huts....The match was applied, and the village was soon in ashes." Upon returning to the ship, the men were held in the boats, given "a taste of grog," and ordered to destroy the neighboring villages of Fusi and Salelesi, which they did, torching "upward of 100 huts....The mission having been completed, the entire party assembled on the beach, destroyed all of the canoes they could find and then returned to their ship, apparently satisfied that a well-deserved punishment had been promptly administered for the murder of an American Seaman."

On February 24, 1948, the *American Samoa Code* was amended to provide for a bicameral legislature, with a House of *Ali'i* and a House of Representatives.

On February 28, 1943, the designation of the "First Samoan Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, Tutuila, Samoa" was changed to "First Samoan Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, 2nd Defense Battalion, Reinforced, 2nd Marine Brigade." A month later, in March, 1943, it was changed again to "First Samoan Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, 2nd Defense Battalion, Reinforced, Fleet Marine Force, in the Field."

ASG RADIO PROGRAM

With: Gov. Togiola Tulafono

On: Showers of Blessings FM 104.7

Saturdays @ 7a.m.

Call: 699-8123/8124

Petti Tagipo Matila selected as intern to US Senator Inouye

Lt. Governor Ipulasi Aitofele Sunia has announced the selection of 23-year-old Petti Tagipo Matila as intern to U.S. Senator Daniel K. Inouye (D-HI) in Washington DC. Matila is currently employed as an administrative assistant for the US Department of Interior's local field office.

As an intern from American Samoa, Matila will relocate off island and become a part of Senator Inouye's legislative staff, providing input and information on various issues they handle. The term for each intern is one year – typically from January to January - which gives the interns the benefit of experiencing one full half of a legislative session of the U.S. Congress.

While working in Honolulu and Washington, D.C., Matila will get an up-close and in-depth look at the legislative process, including the popular appropriations process whereby American Samoa receives its operational as well as capital improvement funding.

Matila's selection was announced by Ipulasi during a press conference where both Matila and her proud mother Lauiula were in attendance. She is the territory's 20th intern for the program. Ipulasi said it was Matila's academic history, credentials, employment qualifications, and integrity in community service that earned her the coveted intern spot.

"I am very happy and honored to extend the greetings and congratulations of Governor Togiola, who is recuperating well in Honolulu, to Petti Matila," Ipulasi said. "The Governor sends his best wishes as we are very happy for Petti's selection because the internship with Senator Inouye allows students to observe politics firsthand and then reflect upon differences between theory and practice." Ipulasi said Matila will have the opportunity to see how politics shape public policy, and how decisions made in Washington affect the nation. "I am sure Petti's experience will help her to understand how politics will affect her career as a future leader of the Territory," the Lt. Governor stated.

Ipulasi expressed his sincere gratitude to Senator Inouye for believing in the American Samoa Internship Program. "On behalf of Governor Togiola, I wish to thank Fofogaosamoa Senator Inouye for this generous gift that honors in every way his commitment to excellence in government within the nation and specifically our region – a direct investment in the future leaders of this great Territory," Ipulasi said. "This intern program is a breeding ground for American Samoa's most talented, energetic and eager minds. American Samoa is indebted to the kind Senator for this great honor."

Ipulasi said it is Governor Togiola's hope that other members of Congress will participate in this very rewarding program that prepares future leaders of the Territory. "Governor Togiola has always said that if we can get other U.S. Senators and Representatives to embrace this internship program, it would mean more opportunities for our young people to experience firsthand the world of politics and a great lesson in government and leadership," Ipulasi said.

Matila thanked God and expressed her gratitude to Senator Inouye, Governor Togiola, and Lt. Governor Ipulasi and said, "I am truly humbled and grateful to be a part of this lifetime opportunity." She also acknowledged her parents Te'o Tagipo Pisa Matila and Lauiula Pua Matila of Ili'ili and Ofu, Manu'a, as well as the Office of Insular Affairs (OIA) for what she calls "the profound knowledge and tremendous experience" she gained to better serve the people of American Samoa. She said, "OIA's mission to 'develop more efficient and effective government in the insular areas by recommending policies, providing financial and technical assistance, and by strengthening Federal-insular relationships' has inspired me significantly to further explore my interest in the fields of law and public policy." Matila concluded by saying, "This wonderful opportunity will be a remarkable experience to closely observe federal legislations that directly impact American Samoa and other U.S. Territories. It will prepare me to be a resourceful leader and, most importantly, as a public servant for the benefit of American Samoa."

Matila graduated from Fa'asao-Marist High School in 2001 as a Congressional Academic Scholar and member of the National Honor Society. She graduated from the American Samoa Community College in the fall of 2002 as class salutatorian with an Associate of Arts degree in Liberal Arts.

Matila, an ASG scholarship recipient, holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science with a minor in Business Administration from the University of Arizona – Tucson.

Being selected as an intern is not a new thing for Matila, who served as a Congressional intern for Congressman Faleomavaega Eni Hunkin's District Office in 2003. Other than work, Matila volunteers her time and serves as acting secretary for the Coverage for All in American Samoa (Healthcare) Advisory Council. She is a certified Microsoft Office specialist who has received introductory trainings in national environmental policy, grants and financial management, and government performance based management.

In 1981, Senator Inouye initiated the American Samoa Internship Program, which created a unique opportunity for Samoan young people to continue their education in the workplace, using the knowledge they gain from their Congressional experience in their service to the people of American Samoa.

Since the program's inception, there have been 19 interns who have served in Senator Inouye's Hawaii and Washington offices. Nikolao Pula, the current Director of DOI's Office of Insular Affairs was the very first intern in 1981. Other past interns include: Lydia Faleafine-Nomura, Lancaster Allen, Christina Lutu, Josie Puletasi, Sina Solomona, Terry Letuli, Nathaniel Savali, Toetasi Tuiteleapaga, Lupe Aumavae and Dora Ah-Sue.

Applications for the 2009 American Samoa Intern Program are now available. For more information, please email the Governor's Legal Counsel Mr. Toetasi Tuiteleapaga at: toetasi@americansamoa.gov

Board of Higher Education looking for a new ASCC president

The Board of Higher Education, which oversees the American Samoa Community College, is currently advertising the ASCC president post.

The opening comes after former ASCC president Dr. Adele Satele-Galea'i stepped down in December, citing health reasons. Since then, Dr. Seth Galea'i has taken over as acting president, although he told Senate members that him serving as acting president is through a contract, but the Board is advertising for a permanent president. Galea'i's contract began in January and expires in July.

According to the advertisement, the ASCC president is the Chief Executive Officer of the American Samoa Community College. He/she is the Board's single official line with the operating organization, and serves at the pleasure of the Board. The president is an educational leader of the Institution and as such, represents the ASCC in the community. The president recommends policies to the Board, and is authorized by the Board to exercise broad discretionary powers per the policies, goals, and general direction of the ASCC, as established by the Board. The president's performance will be considered synonymous with the organizational performance of the ASCC as a whole, and the president shall uphold high ethical standards.

Under the law, the Board of Higher Education recommends three possible candidates for the president post to the Governor who then selects a president from the three nominees.

Duties and responsibilities of the president include providing academic leadership and assuring that the ASCC provides high quality programs and services. Additionally, the president also performs such duties and responsibilities assigned or delegated by the Board while remaining in compliance with Board-established constraints on executive authority which establish the prudent and ethical boundaries within which all executive activities and decisions must take place.

Those interested in applying must have proven ability in management and leadership experience, including strong financial management skills. Applicants must also possess the ability to communicate exceptionally in both written and oral form at all levels, preferably in both the English and Samoan languages. Candidates must have strong interpersonal skills to work with the Board, faculty, staff, and students, and the ability to recruit and market the college programs. The president must have knowledge in grant administration, writing, auditing principles, budget and planning, federal and local laws, and regulations relating to community colleges and their accreditation standards.

Minimum qualifications include a masters degree in education, business, public administration, or a related field from a US recognized institution, and seven years of progressive instructional experience or administrative experiences in post-secondary education, or a total of ten years of proven leadership management ability as Chief Executive Officer in a corporation/agency.

Preferred qualifications include a doctorate degree in education, business, public administration, philosophy, or a related field from a US recognized institution, in addition to five years of secondary instructional experience and five years of management administrative experiences - or a combination of both.

Salary will commensurate with experience and benefits include leave and retirement, housing allowance, vehicle for official use, medical insurance, and travel costs if relocating from off island.

Applications and all required documents may be forwarded to:

Board of Higher Education

Attn: ASCC Director of Human Resources

American Samoa Community College

PO Box 2609

Pago Pago, American Samoa 96799

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF INTENDED ACTION

In accordance with American Samoa Code Annotated ("ASCA") § 4.1004, notice is hereby given that the American Samoa Power Authority ("ASPA") intends to adopt interconnection and net energy metering laws (the "Policy"), to be codified in American Samoa Administrative Code ("ASAC") § 12.06, on or about March 11, 2008. The Policy shall become effective on April 2, 2008.

The Policy pertains to the interconnection of renewable energy generating facilities between ASPA and its customers. ASPA encourages the use of renewable energy technologies and renewable generating facilities, and has adopted these rules to make the process of interconnecting as simple and economical as possible, as well as to protect ASPA's electrical facilities from harm or damage.

In accordance with ASCA § 4.1020, the Policy may be inspected during normal business hours at ASPA's Satala office. Interested persons may submit written data, views and/or arguments on the amendments by U.S. Mail or hand delivery to the following address:

***American Samoa Power Authority
Attn: Michael Keyser, CEO
Satala Office
P.O. Box PPB
Pago Pago, AS 96799***

Additionally, a public hearing on the Policy will be held at the ASPA Tafuna Power Generation conference room on March 6, 2008 from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., at which time all interested persons may submit data, views and arguments orally or in writing. The comment period shall expire and no further written submissions shall be accepted after the date of the public hearing. All written and oral submissions shall become public information upon receipt by ASPA and shall become part of the rulemaking docket.

ASPA Management

Governor's Office receives 55 submissions for territorial quarter design

Lt. Governor Ipulasi Aitofele Sunia has announced that the invitation calling on local residents to submit designs for the territorial quarter netted a total of 55 submissions.

The territorial quarter, set to be released in 2009 along with quarters honoring four other US territories and the District of Columbia, is a first for American Samoa.

In a statement, Ipulasi expressed his sincere gratitude to everyone who submitted a design. "I am deeply happy and honored to have received the 55 submissions from our people in such a short amount of time. I wish to thank and congratulate all the students, teachers, government employees, and private individuals who made wonderful submissions."

He added, "Thank you for using the opportunity to participate in the process."

According to Ipulasi, the submitted designs include the tanoa (ava bowl), fue (fly whisk), to'oto'o (oratory staff), Fale Samoa, and the niu/popou (coconut). Others featured the map of the Samoan archipelago, the seal of American Samoa, taupou, tulafale (High Talking Chief), breadfruit, and pe'a (bat/flying fox), while some artists took it to another level and submitted designs featuring Charlie the Tuna and a creative representation of the Southern Cross.

"Now, we will collaborate with the US Mint for the next 4-5 months to come up with the final designs to choose from, and look forward to our commemorative 25-cent coin in 2009," Ipulasi said.

He stressed that the selection of the final design, as part of the criteria of the US Mint, will be based "on our description through a narrative that we will submit to the coin designers at the US Department of Treasury."

Ipulasi said that local resource materials like artwork, photos, maps, and other relevant materials will be included in the submission, "so that the Mint can design our quarter."

Narratives of the submissions will be prepared and sent by the end of this month to the US Mint who will produce at its discretion one or more original candidate designs for each concept focusing on aesthetic beauty, historical accuracy (the concept or theme does represent the Samoa culture or history accurately), appropriateness (the design must be dignified and one that will make American Samoa and the rest of America proud), and coinability (the design must be one that can be produced on coin).

It is expected that in March or April, the US Mint and the Governor's Office will collaborate on the designs to ensure historical accuracy and proper representation of the designs.

The designs will be refined, as necessary, before they are presented to the Citizens Coinage Advisory Committee (CCAC) and the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) in Washington DC.

The CCAC and the CFA will review the designs and make recommendations in late April and the US Mint, in consultation with the Governor's Office, may make changes to address such recommendations.

By May, the Governor's Office will recommend from among the final designs, its primary and secondary design choices through a process determined by them, within the time frame specified by the US Mint.

The following month, the US Mint will present the primary recommended design from American Samoa to the Secretary of Treasury for approval.

Ipulasi said it is their hope that after going through the lengthy process with the US Mint, and with the approval of the Secretary of Treasury, the final designs will be revealed later this year in July. "The American Samoa territorial quarter will be minted and issued in 2009," he said.

Ipulasi concluded, "Please know in your hearts that through your respective designs, you have participated and contributed to the design and creation of our territorial coin. Thank you for lending a hand to this very important project. We will keep you informed on the latest development from the US Mint."

On December 27, 2007, President George W. Bush signed legislation for American Samoa, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, the United States Virgin Islands, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and Washington DC to have their own commemorative quarter-dollars in 2009.

The new 25 cent coin will continue to feature image of President George Washington on the obverse (heads side) of each quarter. The image on the reverse (tails side) will commemorate the history, geography or traditions of American Samoa.

Designs cannot be designs that are protected by law, and they cannot be representations of heads and shoulders nor portraits of any person, living or dead.

The 50 State Quarters coins is a ten-year program that was introduced in 1999. It will end this year with the issuance of the Hawaii commemorative quarter, marking the 50th State to be honored.

A provision was added by Congress to the 2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act to produce the Territorial Quarters for American Samoa, the other territories, and Washington DC, which will be honored first in 2009. Further information on the 50 State Quarters® Program is available at www.usmint.gov/pressroom

ASCC dedicates completion of new lecture hall

Manager of the DPS Office of Motor Vehicles and wife of Acting Governor Fepulea'i Afa Ripley, Mrs. Marie Ripley, cut the ceremonial ribbon which officially marked the opening of the new lecture hall at the American Samoa Community College in Mapusaga earlier this month.

The new lecture hall, a pair of classrooms, and several new offices have taken over what used to be the ASCC auditorium, which was used as a common venue for most of the College's activities as well as other important functions for different groups and organizations.

The dedication ceremony was well attended by government leaders and the ASCC faculty and staff who were there to witness the unveiling of a project that cost \$200,000.

In his remarks, Fepulea'i, said that the completion of the new lecture hall is a positive step in the production of good citizens of the territory.

Dr. Seth Galea'i, who spoke on behalf of ASCC, recognized and paid tribute to former ASCC president Dr. Adele Satele-Galea'i under whose leadership the project was initiated. He also thanked ASCC's director of Administrative Services John Ah-Sue for seeing the project through.

The work was carried out by contractors Asia Pacific Engineering and Construction Services (APECS) and the certificate of occupancy was presented to the ASCC by Public Works director Taeaotui Punafo Tilei.

Vatia Bay seawall dedicated over a year after work began

The Shoreline Protection Project in Vatia is finally completed, with Lt. Governor Ipulasi Aitofele Sunia presiding over the official but brief dedication ceremony that was well attended by Vatia residents and government officials on Feb. 13.

Funding for the \$1.4 million-dollar-project was provided by the Federal Highway Administration.

The project consists of a 1,000-foot seawall constructed of circular concrete armor units known as "Samoan Stones" for its durability.

Ipulasi expressed his sincere gratitude to the village of Vatia for their patience during the 17-month project.

"On behalf of Governor Togiola Tulafono, who is recuperating well in Honolulu, I wish to say that the dedication of the Vatia Bay Shoreline Protection project today is the fulfillment of another part of the commitment that this administration has made to the people of American Samoa to provide safe and adequate shoreline protection to prevent road erosion due to high waves," said Ipulasi. "I want to thank the village of Vatia for waiting a year and a half for the completion of this project." Ipulasi also expressed his sincere appreciation to the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration.

"I would like to thank the U.S. DOT and FHWA for the positive support that they continue to provide the Territory in these much-needed projects. We greatly appreciate the assistance in securing funds that has made this shoreline protection project a reality," Ipulasi said. "I would like to acknowledge and commend the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Department of Public Works who continue to work diligently to meet the many development goals of this Administration, which includes the commitment to improve infrastructure in American Samoa."

Contractors McConnell Dowell-American Samoa Ltd was awarded the \$1,419,471 project on August 11, 2006. The design was prepared by the architect-engineer firms of M & E Pacific, Inc. and Sea Engineering, Inc., under contract with the Army Corps of Engineers and the Civil Highway Division of Public Works.

The ceremony concluded with Ipulasi's wife Mrs. Elisapeta Sunia cutting the ribbon.

Loop road project in Taputimu completed

Motorists and pedestrians can now enjoy a smoother ride and a more pleasant stroll in Taputimu village, thanks to the successful completion of the 5,000-foot two-lane loop road that veers off the main village road heading seaward.

According to Department of Public Works director Taeaotui Punafo Tilei, the road cost \$328,000 and was fully funded by the Department of Interior as a Capital Improvement Project (CIP).

Lt. Governor Ipulasi Aitofele Sunia officially dedicated the completion of the six-month project during a brief ceremony which was attended by village representatives and government officials.

Ipulasi expressed his sincere gratitude to the village of Taputimu for their support of the project. "I wish to say on behalf of Governor Togiola Tulafono, who sends his greetings and best wishes while he is recuperating well in Honolulu, that we have come together to dedicate the successful completion of this very special road construction for Taputimu, and we thank God and the Department of Interior for the funding. God's blessings and the funding go hand in hand," Ipulasi said.

He added that the road project is part of a program that aims to meet the needs of the traveling public. "Our residents have had to endure hardship and hazards that are associated with an inadequate road system that is under-designed to meet the growing needs of our population."

Ipulasi extended his sincere appreciation to the U.S. Department of Interior for their solid financial support in what he describes as "a very important series of projects" that has enhanced safety and economic development in the Territory.

Ipulasi's wife Mrs. Elisapeta Sunia was given the honor of cutting the ribbon at the ceremony.

ASPA completes construction of Fagasa Road

Proud residents, Fono representatives, and officials from the American Samoa Power Authority were able to witness the official opening of the new cement road in Fagasa that was designed and constructed by ASPA.

The opening took place during a brief ceremony on Tuesday, Feb. 12

Ituau Malosi faipule Rep. Mary Lauagaia M. Taufete'e cut the ribbon signaling the official opening of the road which was built to give ASPA's operations department easy access to their water facilities located there.

The work was carried out by the ASPA construction division after it was approved by the semi-autonomous agency's board of directors and management.

"ASPA did a real nice job and this is a wonderful thing for Fagasa," said Ituau Malosi lawmaker Rep. Taotasi Archie Soliai.

The road is less than a half mile long and it not only gives ASPA workers easy access to their facilities there, it also is a great benefit for nearby residents.

USEPA says American Samoa ranks lowest in toxic releases

The United States Environmental Protection Agency has reported that overall, American Samoa has the least amount of toxic releases of any US state or territory, meaning that the territory ranks the lowest in total releases from 56 states and territories.

According to new data from the USEPA, the only reporting facility in American Samoa that reported a total of five pounds of toxic chemicals released into the air in 2006 is Star Kist Samoa. The data is from the EPA's Toxic Release Inventory which is an annual measure of toxic chemical releases and waste generated by facilities in the United States.

Total release include toxic chemicals discharged into the air, water, underground injection, land (including landfills), and the amount transferred off-site for disposal.

(Data provided does not mean that facilities with elevated levels are out of compliance with state, local, or federal environmental regulations).

The reporting of data to the Toxic Release Inventory is required under the federal Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act, passed in 1986. This program was credited with arming communities with valuable knowledge and encouraging facilities to reduce their releases of toxic chemicals into the environment through source reduction, or pollution prevention measures.

EPA administrator for the Pacific Southwest Region Wayne Nastri said, "TRI is an important tool for regulators, emergency responders, reporters, businesses and communities because it helps us better understand the types and amounts of chemicals being released in our communities." He added, "We are pleased to report American Samoa has the lowest releases of any state or territory in the nation."

Some findings of interest nationally for 2006:

1. Total disposal and other releases are down 2% from last year
2. Combined air releases of TRI chemicals are down 7%
3. Total disposal and other releases of mercury to all media combined increased 17%
4. Air releases of mercury are down 4%
5. From 2001-2006, total releases reported to TRI decreased by 24%

More information on TRI can be found at <http://www.epa.gov/triexplorer/> and <http://www.epa.gov/enviro>.

State fact sheets are available at <http://www.epa.gov/triexplorer/statefactsheet.htm>

Jean P. Haydon Museum hosts annual kids' art show

Over 250 pieces of artwork prepared by the territory's youngest artists are currently on display at the Jean P. Haydon Museum in Fagatogo as part of American Samoa's annual Children's Art Show.

Local residents, especially proud parents and teachers are welcomed to stop by the Museum to take a glimpse of the different art pieces and enjoy the great talent found all over the island.

Of the displayed artwork, only two will be selected from the Children's Art Show to join the Student Art Show which will showcase selected pieces by American Samoa's young artists during the upcoming 10th Festival of Pacific Arts set to be held in the territory from July 20 to August 2.

The two selections will be made by the Arts Fest Visual Arts Subcommittee.

Every school in the territory, both private and public, was invited to submit artwork for the show. Artwork that includes two and three-dimensional media will be on display at the Jean P. Haydon Museum until February 29.

The annual Children's Art Show is organized by the Department of Education's Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Accountability (OCIA).

Lt. Gov. Ipulasi presents... *(from page 1)*

Relying heavily on the two canneries is not economically sound and the ASG, with assistance from DOI, has pursued every opportunity to diversify the Territory's economy, Ipulasi said. He added that the territorial government has actively promoted business investment opportunities for agriculture, fisheries, tourism, call centers, and electronic information processing.

Ipulasi explained, "Recognizing that the Territory's economic level is far below that of the 50 states, Congress had previously decided to establish the federal minimum wage rate in American Samoa proportionate to economic development. Under a procedure that had been applied to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, Congress adjusted the minimum wage in American Samoa administratively every two years so as to reflect the Territory's progress. Such adjustments therefore were economically sustainable." But Congress increased the regular federal rate nationwide, as part of Public Law 110-28, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act of 2007. Congress also mandated an immediate 50 cent increase in the hourly minimum wage rate for American Samoa as of July 24, 2007 with an additional 50-cent increase every year thereafter until the minimum wage in the Territory matched the new federal rate of \$7.25

"This minimum wage hike for American Samoa, similar to the tariff and tax changes, was inserted in the rush to enact the larger legislation without assessing the impact on the Territory," Ipulasi said, adding that the legislation did call for an after-the-fact review of the consequences.

"The Department of Labor has now submitted that report to Congress and the report predicts bitter results for the people of American Samoa," Ipulasi continued. Allowing the mandated wage increase to continue is equivalent to raising the federal minimum wage to \$16.50 an hour in the US.

According to Ipulasi, the economic and political fall-out of such a drastic hike for the United States' economy is obvious, and the Territory must now contend with these very consequences.

On the minimum wage legislation, Ipulasi said that the regular federal rate reflects the United States' advanced industrialized economy, and American Samoa needs to undergo major economic development to match that level.

The DOI reports that per capita GDP in American Samoa amounts to \$9,041 which is equal to 34.4% of per capita GDP in the lowest of the states and 22.8% of the national average. This also compares to a higher \$13,350 per capita GDP in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), \$22,661 in Guam, and \$25,815 in the US Virgin Islands.

American Samoa's per capita income is the lowest of the territories and only one-fifth that of the United States. Ipulasi posed this question: "Can the new minimum federal wage rate which reflects a developed, industrialized economy be sustainable in American Samoa?" He responded by referring to a Department of Labor report stating that the mandated increase is NOT sustainable in American Samoa. According to the report, 77.8 percent of workers in the territory currently earn less than the federally mandated hourly minimum wage and raising hourly wages to \$7.25 an hour will result in an increased wage bill of \$40 million per year across all American Samoa industry sectors.

Base that on the \$120 million annual payroll across all American Samoa industries reported by the 2002 Economic Census, and we're looking at an increase of 33% in wage costs.

"General economic experience suggests that it is not likely that such an increase in wages could be absorbed through increased productivity, reduced profits, or higher prices passed along to consumers," Ipulasi said.

He added that legislative inadvertence is partly due to the fact that the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau do not collect timely economic data on American Samoa. Ipulasi said that regular data collection provides Congress with ample details on labor market conditions, employers, and households in the 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. But the lack of such data for American Samoa leaves Congress and the federal Departments unaware of the economic consequences to this very distant part of the country. Therefore, the remedial legislation should also require such data collection.

The Lt. Governor went on to say that following the recommendations of the American Samoa Economic Advisory Commission, the Government Accountability Office, and the Intergovernmental Group on Insular Areas, the American Samoa Government has worked on an economic development program as he believes increased business development in the territory depends on attracting investments from the United States.

"This program is similar to the initiatives various U.S. states have adopted to promote business development. Basically, these state programs offer economic incentives to businesses that commit to investments, hiring, and long-term operations in the respective state," Ipulasi said.

He added that the ASG is committed to developing the Territory's economy in order to raise the people's standard of living and in addition to federal initiatives, American Samoa must create a local development program just as the states have. Following the best examples of state development initiatives, American Samoa is crafting its own local program. But Ipulasi says that resources for this and other territorial initiatives have been diverted to cope with the problems resulting from the mandated minimum wage increase.

The Department of Labor's assessment of the impact of the minimum wage increase states: "General experience in the U.S. and elsewhere has shown that potential adverse employment effects of minimum wage increases can be ... offset to some degree by an expanding economy that is generating net employment growth. In a declining economy, any adverse effects on employment will not be offset."

(continued on page 10)



Public Notice of Intent

The American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency (AS-EPA) and the Environmental Quality Commission (EQC) are proposing to amend the “Safe Drinking Water” regulations in Title 25 Chapter 4 of the American Samoa Administrative Code. The main points of proposed changes to the laws involve:

- Bottled water standards for local, on-island bottlers;
- American Samoa Power Authority (ASPA) water treatment operators certification programs;
- ASEPA Water Quality Laboratory fees;
- General grammatical and formatting changes.

The proposed changes are available for review at the AS-EPA office in Utulei. The public may submit written comments about the proposed changes via email to ASEPAcomments@gmail.com or by mailing them to: Safe Drinking Water Comments, PO Box PPA, Pago Pago, AS 96799. A public hearing will be held at 10 AM on March 10, 2008 in the AS-EPA Conference Room for interested parties to present their comments in person to AS-EPA and EQC members.

Fa'asilasilaga Fa'alaua'itele

Ua i ai nei se talosaga mai le Ofisa O Puipuia Le Si'osi'omaga i Amerika Samoa (ASEPA) ma le Komisi Mo Le Mamā O Le Si'osi'omaga (EQC) e faia ni suiga i tulafono mo le “Suavai Taumafa Saogalemu,” Tulafono Fa'aulutalaina 25 Vaega 4 o le Tusi Tulafono a le Malo a Amerika Samoa. O mata'upu taua o le talosaga o lo'o fia suia i le tulafono e aofia ai:

- Tapula'a fa'atulagaina mo fagu vai o lo'o gaosia i Amerika Samoa;
- Polokalama e pasia ai le au faigaluega a le Malosi'aga Fa'a'etise ma Le Suavai (ASPA), i latou o lo'o gafa ma le fa'availa'auina o le suavai.
- Tupe totogi mo le Potu Su'esu'e a le ASEPA mo le Suavai Taumafa;
- Suia o le gagana ma le fa'ata'otoga o le tulafono mo le Suavai Taumafa.

O lenei talosaga o lo'o iai nei i le Ofisa o le AS-EPA i Utulei mo le mamalu o le atunu'u e mafai ona faitau ai. E mafai ona fa'ao'o atu tusitusiga uma mo lenei talosaga e ala atu i le imeli ASEPAcomments@gmail.com po o le pusa meli: Fa'amatalaga mo le Suavai Taumafa Saogalemu, PO Box PPA, Pago Pago, AS 96799. O le a faia se fono ia Mati 10, 2008 i le 10am mo le mamalu o le atunu'u ma i latou uma e fia saunoa ai i lea mata'upu i le potu fono a le ASEPA i Utulei.

PREL accepting applications for the annual Pacific Teacher Scholarships

The Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) has issued a statement announcing the acceptance of applications for the annual Pacific Teacher Scholarships (2008-2009).

Scholarship amounts range from \$750 to \$1,000 and are awarded to those who will be in their second, third, or fourth year of study in an accredited teacher preparation program.

The scholarship fund was created in 2004 with the goal of increasing the number of qualified teachers working in the US-affiliated Pacific.

Approximately twenty-three teachers in the region have already been awarded scholarships.

Eligibility is extended interested applicants who reside in American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Guam, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), or the Republic of Palau who intend to teach in a public school in the US-affiliated Pacific.

All completed applications must be received by the local PREL service center or the Honolulu office by April 1, 2008.

Interested individuals may apply at the local PREL service center (www.prel.org/contactPREL.aspx), or visit PREL's Pacific Teacher Scholarship website at www.prel.org/opportunities/pacific-teacher-scholarship.aspx where application forms and instructions on how to apply can be found.

Lt. Gov. Ipulasi presents... *(from page 8)*

On that note, Ipulasi says that the territorial economy at present is “anemic” and the territorial government must cope with falling tax revenues.

The Labor report also projects that the minimum wage increase for local government workers alone will increase ASG’s operating costs by \$7.2 million a year. The report concludes: “Paying for the increases in government worker minimum wages will present a significant challenge to ASG [the American Samoan Government].... These increases may force ASG to make difficult choices between reducing government payrolls, reducing available hours of paid work, raising taxes, or cutting non-wage expenditures.”

Ipulasi said that the first 50-cent mandated increase imposed added operational costs to the ASG and the same will occur during the second 50-cent hike set to take effect later this year in May.

As a result, Ipulasi said the Territory must request supplemental budget authorization and appropriations to cover the additional operational costs imposed by recent federal legislation and also to implement its local development initiatives.

Ipulasi concluded his statement by saying, “Now that the Department of Labor has documented the dire impact of the 2007 legislative change on American Samoa, I urgently request this Committee and Congress to enact timely remedial legislation. Committee support for the pursuit and enactment of tax and appropriation measures to correct the unintended but very real consequences of past actions is also needed and would be greatly appreciated. We in American Samoa are proud to be Americans and we have served our country with valor and devotion. Remedial legislation will help us to develop our economy so that we can stand with the other territories and the 50 states as one nation.”

Governor Togiola and Congressman Faleomavaega are scheduled to testify on the minimum wage bill on Friday, February 28 before the US Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources in Washington DC. The purpose of the hearing is to hear testimony about the impact of increasing the minimum wages on the economy of American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI).

Togiola and Faleomavaega will be joined as witnesses by CNMI Governor Benigno Fital, a CNMI resident representative in Washington, and an economist from the US Department of Labor.

On February 28, 1947, Talalelei (later Togiola) Tulafono, American Samoa's fifth elected lieutenant governor, and later elected governor, was born in American Samoa.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY GOVERNOR TOGIOLA!

FA’ASALALAUGA FA’ALAU’ITELE

E tusa ai ma le tulafono American Samoa Code Annotated (“ASCA”) § 4.1004, e fa’asilasila atu ai i le mamalu o le atunu’u, o loo fuafua e le Ofisa o le Eletise ma le Vai (ASPA) o le a amata ia Aperila 2, 2008 ona faamamalu aiaiga fou. Ua faia ia aiaiga mo mita e mafai ona fuafua ai le faaoga felafoa’i o le eletise a le ASPA ma le eletise fa’anatura; ma o le a faamauina faatulafono i le American Samoa Administrative Code (“ASAC”) § 12.06, e latalata ia Mati 11, 2008. O lena aiaiga e faasino i le faaogaina o mea faigaluega a le ASPA e faafesoota’i ai eletise fa’anatura i le va lelei ma ana paaga. E sapaapaia e le ASPA le fa’aogaina o tekonolosi mo le gaosiga o le eletise fa’anatura, ma ua faamautu ai nei aiaiga e faia ai faafesoota’iga i se ala aupitoa’i faigofie ma taugofie, ma puipuia ai mea faigaluega a le ASPA mai le fa’aleagaina.

E tusa ai ma le ASCA § 4.1020, e mafai ona silasila i le tulafono i taimi faigaluega masani o le ASPA i Satala. Soo se tasi e manatu iai, ia faao’o mai sou finagalo fa’aali poo sau faafinauga o suiga e ala i se tusitusiga e lafo mai i le meli pe tauaao mai i le tuatusi lena:

American Samoa Power Authority
Attn: Michael Keyser, CEO
Satala Office
P.O. Box PPB
Pago Pago, AS 96799

O le a faia fo’i se iloiloga o lena aiaiga mo tagata lautele i le Aso Tofi, Mati 6, 2008, i le 9:30 i le taeao e oo i le 12:30 i le aoauli i le potu fono o le ASPA Generation i Tafuna. O le a mafai ona faaulu mai ai e ala i tusitusiga poo saunoaga ni faamaumauga, manatu faaalai, poo faafinauga. O le a faamuta ai i lea aso le talia o ni tusitusiga. Ua fa’atulagaina e fa’amuta i le aso o lea iloiloga fa’alaua’itele. O tusitusiga ma saunoaga uma e faauluina mai i le ASPA o le a avea ma manatu faala’ua’itele ma faaopoopo i pepa faamaumauina o le fauina o le tulafono.

Puleaga a le Ofisa o le Uila
ma le Vai